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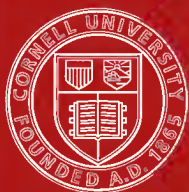
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THE EDUCATION OF  
MR. SURRAGE

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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MARY BROOME: A Comedy in  
Four Acts.      [*Second Impression*]

"Unquestionably the strongest, the most courageous, and the most penetrating play that we have had from an Englishman this decade."—*Manchester Courier*.

THE EDUCATION OF MR  
SURRAGE: A COMEDY IN  
FOUR ACTS. BY ALLAN  
MONKHOUSE

LONDON : SIDGWICK & JACKSON, LTD.  
3 ADAM STREET, ADELPHI. MCMXIII

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“The Education of Mr. Surrage” was first produced at the Liverpool Repertory Theatre on November 4, 1912, with the following cast :

|                          |   |   |   |   |                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| <i>Rose Surrage</i>      | . | . | . | . | MISS EILEEN THORNDIKE. |
| <i>Archie Surrage</i>    | . | . | . | . | MR. SCOTT SUNDERLAND.  |
| <i>Mr. Surrage</i>       | . | . | . | . | MR. ARTHUR CHESNEY.    |
| <i>Violet Surrage</i>    | . | . | . | . | MISS ESTELLE WINWOOD.  |
| <i>Mrs. Staines</i>      | . | . | . | . | MISS ADA POTTER.       |
| <i>Bindloss</i>          | . | . | . | . | MR. WILFRID E. SHINE.  |
| <i>Arthur Suckling</i>   | . | . | . | . | MR. J. H. ROBERTS.     |
| <i>Geoffrey Vallance</i> | . | . | . | . | MR. LAWRENCE HANRAY.   |



## CHARACTERS

PERCEVAL SURRAGE, a widower of fifty.

ARCHIE SURRAGE, his son.

ROSE SURRAGE, } his daughters.  
VIOLET SURRAGE, }

MRS. STAINES.

GEOFFREY VALLANCE.

ARTHUR SUCKLING.

BINDLOSS.

*The first three Acts take place in the hall of a country house, about forty miles from London, and the fourth in the ante-room to a Bond Street picture-show.*



# THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

## ACT I

*The hall of a country house about forty miles from London. An entrance at back into the garden. The furniture rather commonplace old-fashioned. Landseer engraving, etc. An open bureau. ROSE stands expectantly. ARCHIE enters.*

ARCHIE. Hullo, Rose! Here we are. Where's Violet? Where's the Governor?

ROSE. Have they come? Who's come?

ARCHIE. Where's the Governor? Where's father? He knows, I suppose? He's all right about it?

ROSE. Oh! I think so. Yes. We've been preparing him. Where are they?

ARCHIE. Vallance and Suckling have gone to their rooms right away. They'll be down for tea directly. I missed them at King's Cross diplomatically. They wouldn't travel together.

ROSE. And Mrs. Staines? Hasn't she come? I'm sorry we were out. We've been trying to get some of those big lilies. You're early, aren't you?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. She didn't come with us. She's motoring across from somewhere. I say, Rose, he'll dress for dinner, won't he? Did you say anything about that?

ROSE. Yes. He only laughed.

ARCHIE. I hope he'll get on with Vallance. I'm not sure that we haven't struck it a bit high for a start.

ROSE. Who? Mr. Vallance?

ARCHIE. Both, if it comes to that. However, it was a chance to get hold of a man like Vallance.

ROSE. It's all right, I suppose, Archie? Violet's rather young. Mr. Vallance is—I mean he's——

ARCHIE. My dear girl. It's rather late to begin to talk now. Oh! here's the Governor.

SURRAGE *enters. He is a widower of fifty; a pleasant, courteous man, generally simple, but not incapable of irony. He has been very dull lately, having retired from business against his wish, and so is ready for some kind of suitable adventure.*

How are you, sir? How are you? [*They shake hands.*]

SURRAGE. How are you, my boy? Got down all right? Your friends haven't come? Well, never mind. We'll have a snug family party. [*He yawns.*]

ROSE. Oh yes! They're here.

ARCHIE. Yes. Yes. They'll be down directly.

SURRAGE. Let me see. How many of them?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. There's Vallance and Suckling; they're upstairs. Mrs. Staines is motoring over.

SURRAGE. Who is Mrs. Staines? I don't seem to remember your talking about her. [*He goes to the bureau and deposits some money there. He takes out his keys and is about to lock it away, but puts them down as he listens to what Archie says. He comes forward.*]

ARCHIE. Oh! She's—well—I think you'll like her. She's an uncommonly—awfully good company.

SURRAGE. Well, who is Mr. Staines?

ROSE. He's dead, isn't he, Archie?

ARCHIE. Well—I suppose so—that is to say—so far as I know——

ROSE. You see, father, we don't consider who people are, but what they are.

SURRAGE. And what is she? Is she—anything unusual?

ARCHIE. A charming woman, sir. That's enough. You see, we are anxious that you should—if I may put it so—share our—well, our liberal developments.

ROSE. Even if you don't go quite as far as we do, father, you can sympathise with us in—in—what we are aiming at, you know.

SURRAGE. Certainly, my dear. By the by, what are you aiming at?

ROSE. We are trying to make our lives fuller and freer.

SURRAGE. Quite so. Now, about these men upstairs—just post me up again.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. Vallance is one of the most distinguished living painters. An extraordinary man. A little eccentric, perhaps. You'll get on capitally with him.

SURRAGE. Is he an R.A.?

ARCHIE. An R.A.? My dear father!

SURRAGE. I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to insult him. Perhaps he's a post-something. What is it? Post-master? No, no.

ROSE. Father's getting quite witty.

*VIOLET comes in hurriedly.*

VIOLET. Rose! I say! We forgot about these pictures. Hullo, Archie! Who's come?

ARCHIE. What pictures?

ROSE. It's too late now.

VIOLET. Rose and I meant to get some of them down.

SURRAGE. What for?

ARCHIE. What!—you mean—some of these——  
[*He looks about him.*]

VIOLET. We might at least have had that Landseer thing away.

ROSE. Some of these others are just as bad. Worse. Mid-Victorian things are coming in again.

ARCHIE. It's no use tinkering with it. He's a man of the world.

ROSE. It's the pretty good modern things that annoy them.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. You ought to have let us furnish for you, father, when we came here.

SURRAGE. Now, what's wrong with it all?

ARCHIE. It's all right, sir. It's not your fault.

SURRAGE. Whose is it?

ROSE. Don't worry, father. It's a little old-fashioned, but it isn't your fault.

SURRAGE. I wonder whose fault it is?

VIOLET. Look at those curtains.

SURRAGE. Will it be very painful for these gentlemen? I don't like to think of their suffering.

ARCHIE. It's all perfectly right, sir.

SURRAGE. If it makes them poorly you must get an ambulance and take them away.

ARCHIE. I wish you'd keep quiet, Violet. Look here, sir, we've never had a week-end party since we came here. We'd like to make a success of it. I hope you'll be nice to—I hope you'll get on with these people. Of course you may find them a little—unusual.

SURRAGE. You're not ashamed of them, are you?

ARCHIE. Certainly not.

SURRAGE. And you're not ashamed of me?

ARCHIE. Sir!

ROSE. Father!

VIOLET. No—no, father.

SURRAGE. Well, then, I'm quite looking forward to it.

ARCHIE. Bravo, sir!

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. You know, I've been a bit dull. You shouldn't have made me give up business. I'm too old to start keeping hens.

*Sounds of motor—distant, etc.*

ARCHIE. Hark! That'll be Mrs. Staines. Will you go, Rose? Or I'll go.

SURRAGE. Let's all go.

VIOLET. Father's getting into the spirit of it.

SURRAGE. Of course I am.

ROSE. I'll go. [*She goes out.*]

SURRAGE. Let's see. There's another, isn't there? The lady, the painter——

ARCHIE. Oh! yes. Suckling.

SURRAGE. And what's his line?

ARCHIE. Oh! well—he's rather a young chap, but very much in it, you know. He writes plays. He's quite in the swim.

SURRAGE. And where are they performed?

VIOLET. He's a bit good for the regular theatres.

SURRAGE. Humph! And your painter? Does he ever sell his pictures?

ARCHIE. Of course, my dear father, the business man's attitude toward this kind of thing is—well—rather mercenary.

SURRAGE. Yes. That was my fault as a business man. I was mercenary.

ARCHIE. You mustn't judge Vallance's pictures from that point of view.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Too good also, are they ?

ARCHIE. He will paint to please himself.

SURRAGE. I wonder why these people are coming here ?

VIOLET. What ?

ARCHIE. What's that ?

SURRAGE. Why do they come ? What do they want ? It's all right. Quite natural, of course. I forget sometimes that I haven't kept up with you. Ah ! here's the lady.

*MRS. STAINES comes in with ROSE. VIOLET and ARCHIE go to meet them, and the three crowd round her for a few moments, greeting her. Then SURRAGE advances and bows. He and MRS. STAINES shake hands and look at one another. MRS. STAINES is a handsome woman of thirty-five. She is well dressed, composed, rather on her guard.*

ARCHIE. My father, Mrs. Staines.

SURRAGE. Welcome.

MRS. S. It's good of you to have me, Mr. Surrage.

SURRAGE. I'm glad to know my children's friends.

MRS. S. And to make them your friends, I hope.

SURRAGE. I must not expect too much.

ARCHIE. Come, sir, that's rather double-edged.

SURRAGE. You must forgive some clumsiness in me, ma'am. I'm not used to society.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

MRS. S. I think you can hold your own.

ROSE. Ring for tea, Archie. You'll have some before you go upstairs, won't you, Mrs. Staines?

MRS. S. Thanks, yes. [*She takes off wraps and ARCHIE rings.*] May the chauffeur have some tea before he goes back?

SURRAGE. Certainly. Where does he have it?

VIOLET. Really, father!

SURRAGE. I'm perplexed by chauffeurs.

MRS. S. They're dropping in the social scale; they're not what they were.

BINDLOSS *enters*.

ROSE. Tea, And——

ARCHIE. Look after the chauffeur, will you, Bindloss?

BINDLOSS. Certainly, sir. If you please, sir——

ARCHIE. What?

BINDLOSS. If you please, sir, one of the gentlemen upstairs wished me to ask you—perhaps you would like to speak to him, sir?

ARCHIE. What is it, Bindloss?

BINDLOSS. He wished to ask you to lend him a shoe.

ARCHIE. A shoe?

BINDLOSS. I presume he meant a pair, sir, but he said a shoe.

*Enter SUCKLING.*

SUCKLING. Ah! How d'ye do? [*He shakes hands*

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

*effusively with SURRAGE and greets the OTHERS.*] Mrs. Staines? How jolly. Where d'you come from? I say! D'ye know who's upstairs? Oh! well. [*To SURRAGE.*] Jolly place you've got here, sir.

SURRAGE. What about your friend's shoe?

SUCKLING. What? Eh? Oh yes. Vallance was asking about a shoe. He said his boots let in the rain and he'd only brought one shoe. He's a queer chap. Rum sort of kit he's brought. [*Confidentially.*] Of course, he's frightfully hard up.

MRS. S. Mr. Vallance is here?

ROSE. Yes. Of course you know him, Mrs. Staines?

MRS. S. I used to know him.

SUCKLING. Oh yes. By Jove! Certainly.

SURRAGE. Do we want Bindloss?

ARCHIE. Oh! I'll go.

*ARCHIE and BINDLOSS go out.*

SUCKLING [*to SURRAGE*]. Been up to town lately, sir?

SURRAGE. Alas! no. I'm out of business.

SUCKLING. Quite so. There's nothing worth seeing. That thing at the Imperial is a frost.

SURRAGE. The Imperial—Institute?

SUCKLING. Good, sir. Good. It's about as dull—I meant the Theatre.

SURRAGE. You're interested in the theatre?

SUCKLING. Rather. It's my subject. Aren't you? Never mind, you shall be. I'll interest you. The

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

business side of it's most interesting. You'd like the business side.

SURRAGE *nods at him and goes to sit beside*  
MRS. STAINES.

SUCKLING [*aside to ROSE*]. I say, why did you ask Vallance with her?

ROSE [*startled*]. Why not?

SUCKLING. Oh! nothing. Here's tea.

BINDLOSS *enters with tea-things, etc.*

[*Affably.*] Well, has he got his shoe?

BINDLOSS. I believe Mr. Archie is attending to him, sir.

ROSE *pours out tea, etc.* BINDLOSS *goes out.*

SUCKLING. I was a bit surprised when I met Vallance at King's Cross. He wanted me to come third. Poor devil! He had to. I did offer to come in and have a chat with him, but he turned surly.

MRS. S. Mr. Suckling is famous for his indiscretions.

SUCKLING. Aren't I? They always say I've no manners. I've plumped out some things in my time. It's rather useful, you know. I've made some good stage situations—watched them too, you know. Always studying.

ROSE. Save us!

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. Shall you plump out anything here, Mr. Suckling?

SUCKLING. Who knows? Oh no, no—of course not. Certainly not. Here's Vallance. By Jove——

ARCHIE *enters with* VALLANCE, *who greets the*  
SURRAGES *politely and rather casually.*  
*A slight exclamation escapes him when he*  
*turns to* MRS. STAINES. VALLANCE *is*  
*slovenly and strange, not over-clean,*  
*bearded, handsome, rather impatient.*

VALLANCE. You're not his wife?

MRS. S. What do you mean?

ROSE. You know Mrs. Staines?

VALLANCE. Oh yes. Mrs. Staines—we met—let me see——

SUCKLING. Always meeting people in town, you know. Wonderful place, London. Lot of different sets, of course. Don't stick to one myself. Why should I?

ROSE. It would be too bad of you.

SUCKLING. Well, they make me gad about. By Jove, yes!

VIOLET *hands* VALLANCE *tea, etc., and he begins*  
*to eat rather ravenously. He looks about*  
*him.*

SURRAGE. You're looking at my pictures, Mr. Vallance?

VALLANCE. Yes, they are pictures.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Not in your line?

VALLANCE. No.

SUCKLING [*aside to ROSE*]. He doesn't get enough to eat.

ROSE. Hush!

ARCHIE [*to SURRAGE*]. Vallance belongs to a new order. [*To VALLANCE.*] I suppose one might call you a futurist?

ROSE. Or an atavist?

VALLANCE. Nonsense.

VIOLET. Well, what are you, Mr. Vallance?

VALLANCE. I'm a painter.

ROSE. Still, you can be placed, I suppose?

MRS. S. He doesn't like being placed.

SUCKLING. Now look here, you people—I'm going to be frank with you. We haven't shaken down yet. We're a lot of different kinds. It's a rum party. Excuse me. It is—we may know each other, but we're different kinds. Well, anything's better than being stodgy. And Mr. Surrage there—our host—he's wondering what the deuce we are and why we're here. Aren't you now—frankly?

MRS. S. [*laughing nervously*]. Frankly, Mr. Surrage?

SURRAGE. I'm a little at sea, ma'am. I'm not prepared. As I tell you, I'm hardly up to the ways of society. But I like frankness too.

SUCKLING. Good heavens! This isn't society. We aren't ordinary people, are we Vallance?

VALLANCE. You're a fool.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SUCKLING. Do you hear that? There's frankness. [To ARCHIE.] Don't look so glum, Surrage. What's the matter?

ARCHIE. You do play the fool a bit, you know.

SUCKLING. Good—frankness again. Miss Surrage, Miss Violet—your turn.

ROSE. Won't you come and take off your things, Mrs. Staines?

SUCKLING. A snub for me. Frankness again. You can't help it. Miss Violet?

VIOLET. You're too absurd, but—— [*She bursts into a peal of laughter.*]

SUCKLING. Frankly amused. It's a regular palace of truth. Can you oblige us now, Mrs. Staines?

MRS. S. [*to SURRAGE*]. I'm sorry for you.

SUCKLING. The first forfeit. She doesn't mean it.

MRS. S. [*to SURRAGE*]. You'll show me the garden presently, I hope? [*She rises and gets together her wraps. She goes out with ROSE.*]

SURRAGE. With pleasure, ma'am.

ARCHIE. A cigarette, Suckling? What about the garden?

SUCKLING. On condition that your sister comes too.

VIOLET. Frankly, I will.

SUCKLING. I'm delighted.

*They go out, leaving SURRAGE and VALLANCE alone.*

SURRAGE. Would you like to follow?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. No.

SURRAGE. Smoke?

VALLANCE. No.

SURRAGE. Do you know this part of the country, Mr. Vallance?

VALLANCE. I don't know where we are.

SURRAGE. To pursue our friend's method—what can have induced you to come here?

VALLANCE. Is that your hospitable inquiry?

SURRAGE. Excuse me, the circumstances are exceptional.

VALLANCE. How?

SURRAGE. You came here at the invitation of my children.

VALLANCE. Well?

SURRAGE. And you make no pretence of concealing your contempt for us.

VALLANCE [*after a pause*]. They wanted me to come.

SURRAGE. Oh! It was the kindness of your heart?

VALLANCE [*with a short laugh*]. Very likely.

SURRAGE. You know Mrs. Staines?

VALLANCE. As you see.

SURRAGE. I can see a possible reason for you visiting my house.

VALLANCE. I didn't know she was here.

SURRAGE. Then the mystery remains.

VALLANCE. What mystery? Do you think so badly of your children? Am I incapable of friend-

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ship with these young creatures? You're a strange host.

SURRAGE. Yes. That distresses me. But I want to understand them, and to do that I must understand you. Forgive me, sir. But you are a strange guest.

VALLANCE. I'm a painter; you're a rich man. We're always on the look-out for patrons.

SURRAGE. That's it, is it?

VALLANCE [*hotly*]. It is not.

SURRAGE. I mustn't question you. I'm extremely sorry if I've been rude.

VALLANCE. You ought to see that I'm irritated. I was a fool to come.

SURRAGE. Ah! But I hope you won't think so long.

*They stand looking at one another. VALLANCE turns to go and returns. He speaks passionately.*

VALLANCE. I'll tell you. I'll tell you why I came.

SURRAGE. No, no. Do not. I don't ask it.

VALLANCE [*speaking through SURRAGE's speech*]. I came here to get several good meals. I don't always have enough to eat.

SURRAGE. Good gracious!

VALLANCE. That's the sort of thing to stagger you sentimentalists.

SURRAGE. I can't forgive myself.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. No. Poor fellow. Let me console you. The chagrin of making this confession is a bagatelle beside an hour's hunger. I've had many an hour.

SURRAGE. And you're a great painter, they say.

VALLANCE. And they're right.

SURRAGE. Well, why on earth——

VALLANCE. I'm going. Will you lend me your carriage? I'll get my things. My thanks and apologies.

SURRAGE. I beg you to stay.

VALLANCE. No. You'll be watching how much I eat.

*He walks up to the tea-table and takes more food. BINDLOSS appears at the door, stares, and retires.*

SURRAGE. Pray consider how horrible it would be for me if you went now.

VALLANCE. It won't hurt you. I've the greatest contempt for mental trouble. Besides, I was exaggerating. I only meant that my meals are not served comfortably.

SURRAGE. Don't go. How could I explain to my children?

VALLANCE. Poor chickens! They'd be startled, I suppose. I don't care. Yet, why shouldn't I stay? Are they all staying till Monday?

SURRAGE. Certainly.

VALLANCE. I'll stay.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Thank you.

VALLANCE. Why do you let these absurd young creatures bully you?

SURRAGE. Bully me?

VALLANCE. Well, what is it? Why should they force such people on you? Me, I mean; me and that fool Suckling and this woman. We're not your sort. You're the master of this house, I suppose?

SURRAGE. You've no children?

VALLANCE. I don't know of any.

SURRAGE. Then you'd hardly understand.

VALLANCE. I think I could understand any of your mental processes.

SURRAGE. One wants to keep up with one's children. To lose touch with them is to grow old.

VALLANCE. Well?

SURRAGE. They've tastes and ideas and companions. One would wish to share—to progress with them.

VALLANCE. And we're the companions?

SURRAGE. Aren't you?

VALLANCE. Charming old innocent you are. You want to keep up with them and they want to keep up with us. Why should you? Why can't you be natural? You're all right as you are.

SURRAGE. What! You are not really their kind, then?

VALLANCE. Oh! They're quite respectable young people.

SURRAGE. You don't claim to be respectable?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Not as you understand it.

SURRAGE. How are you different? That's what I want to understand.

VALLANCE. You'd better ask them.

SURRAGE. Do they know?

VALLANCE. They pretend to. They play at knowing. They'll give you a rough idea.

SURRAGE. You are what they admire.

VALLANCE. By Jove! It's funny to think of them trying to teach you. You're no fool, man.

SURRAGE. Mrs. Staines is—is one of you?

VALLANCE. You're a widower, aren't you?

SURRAGE. Yes. Is she a widow?

VALLANCE. I don't seem to know anything about Mr. Staines.

SURRAGE. What do you mean by that?

VALLANCE. My dear sir, this week-end will soon be over. You've been landed in it by the vanity of your children. They fancy they're at the heart of things. Better let us go and think no more about it.

SURRAGE. Yes, there are differences. With my kind the man who hints against a woman's reputation is considered a blackguard.

VALLANCE [*impatiently*]. Oh! this is a language I don't understand.

SURRAGE. Hush!

MRS. STAINES *enters*.

MRS. S. [*looks at them uneasily*]. You were going to show me the garden, Mr. Surrage.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Yes, yes. Delighted. Pray come——

VALLANCE. May I smoke here?

SURRAGE. By all means. Have a cigar. Where are they? A moment. I'll get you one. A moment. Excuse me.

*He goes out.*

VALLANCE. What, in hell's name, brought you here?

MRS. S. Or you?

VALLANCE. He's a rich man; he might buy my pictures.

MRS. S. He would like your pictures, wouldn't he?

VALLANCE. They don't buy because they like 'em. It's when they think it's the right thing.

MRS. S. Ah! but he's not that kind.

VALLANCE. What kind is he?

MRS. S. I believe he's a kind I could like.

VALLANCE. What! What! Is that it? You're making up to him. Take care. You'll come a cropper.

MRS. S. [*indignantly*]. I never saw him before to-day. I didn't know he existed.

VALLANCE. These kids captured you too, then?

MRS. S. One must go somewhere. One must do something. How should a woman like me live?

VALLANCE. Poor old Janey. But where have you come from? What are you doing? Have you left

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

—do you mean to say you're—— Whose car was that you came in ?

MRS. S. All I have in the world's in my box. When I leave here on Monday I don't know where I'm going.

VALLANCE. I think I know.

MRS. S. No, no.

VALLANCE. That old fellow got on my nerves. I was thinking of you. So was he, it seems.

MRS. S. He makes me feel guilty, somehow.

VALLANCE. Rubbish! Oh, look here! How much money have you ?

MRS. S. Next to nothing.

VALLANCE. Confound it! I shall come to your infernal potboilers yet. You won't care.

MRS. S. Yes, I shall.

VALLANCE. He's coming.

SURRAGE *enters with cigars, and VALLANCE takes one and lights it.*

SURRAGE. Come.

MRS. STAINES *and SURRAGE go out. VALLANCE strolls about the room rather aimlessly. He comes to the bureau and stops, staring at the money there. He walks slowly towards the door, then turns back suddenly, comes to the desk and gathers the money, putting it, at two motions, into his pocket. As he is strolling out of the room ROSE enters.*

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ROSE. Mr. Vallance, we're going round to look at the church. It's rather a fine old place. Would you care to come?

VALLANCE. The church? By all means. Certainly, the church.

VIOLET *and* ARCHIE *enter*.

I'll get my hat. [*He goes out.*]

ROSE. Well, how's it going?

ARCHIE. I was rather afraid of a fiasco just now; Vallance is a bit steep, you know.

VIOLET. Oh, Archie! You didn't expect him to be commonplace, did you?

ARCHIE. Of course not, but—did you see Bindloss staring at him?

VIOLET. We can't choose our friends to please Bindloss.

ROSE. I think it's going excellently. It's difficult, of course. Any social success out of the ordinary is difficult. I'm a little doubtful about Mr. Suckling.

VIOLET. Oh, Rose! I think he's the best fun of the lot.

ARCHIE. Vallance and the Governor have been chatting here for some time. They seem to have got on all right.

ROSE. And father seems quite to have taken to Mrs. Staines.

VIOLET. Yes, they're out in the garden together now.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. Are they? Of course, we want them to get on nicely, but——

ROSE. But what, Archie?

ARCHIE. Not too nicely.

ROSE. What can you mean?

VIOLET. He means father might want to marry her.

ROSE [*perturbed*]. That's impossible, Archie.

ARCHIE [*he has walked to the window and is looking out*]. Just look here!

*The OTHERS hurry up.*

She's taken his arm.

ROSE. Well!

VIOLET. I know what it is. He thought it was the right thing to offer it.

ROSE. He's very polite.

ARCHIE. He's very impressionable.

ROSE. You oughtn't to say so, Archie.

ARCHIE. What harm is there in being impressionable? Why! Every artist must be.

ROSE. Father's not an artist. He has no business to—to——

VIOLET. To be an artist.

ARCHIE. Hullo! There's Vallance.

ROSE. How picturesque he looks. He's going to the church with us. Come on.

VIOLET. I say—look at that.

ARCHIE. It looked rather summary, didn't it?

ROSE. What was it? What was it?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. He seemed to cut the Governor out, didn't he?

ROSE. Where's father gone?

VIOLET. He's coming in, I think.

ROSE. What was it? I didn't quite see——

*SURRAGE comes in.*

SURRAGE. Who is Mrs. Staines?

ROSE. Really, father——

SURRAGE. Is there any point in her and this Mr. Vallance being here together?

ROSE. He wanted a suitable house-party.

SURRAGE. Yes, but I'm puzzled. Those two——  
[*He approaches the window.*] No—no. I can't spy on them.

*SUCKLING comes in.*

SUCKLING. We don't seem to be getting off. Mrs. Staines is waiting.

ROSE. And Mr. Vallance? Come along.

SUCKLING. No. He won't go now. He's coming in.

ARCHIE. Well, come, whoever's coming.

ROSE, VIOLET, ARCHIE, and SUCKLING *are going out as VALLANCE comes in.*

ROSE. You won't come, Mr. Vallance?

VALLANCE. I want to talk to your father.

*THEY go out.*

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Sit down, Mr. Vallance.

VALLANCE. No, thanks. It's nothing. Well—I'm rather good, you know, at coming to the point.

SURRAGE. Yes. I like that.

VALLANCE. I was wondering whether you could lend me a couple of sovereigns?

SURRAGE. Oh!

VALLANCE. You're a bit staggered?

SURRAGE. I seem to be—gaining experience.

VALLANCE. And how charming for you to awaken like this into a new world!

SURRAGE. You see, I've got used to the old world.

VALLANCE. You strike me as a simple-minded man. You should appreciate directness.

SURRAGE. Directness?

VALLANCE. Do you know, the great artists have always been simple, direct creatures—rather like you.

SURRAGE. Thanks.

VALLANCE. And I don't beat about the bush with you. I just ask you for two sovereigns.

SURRAGE. I see the simplicity of it.

VALLANCE. Yes, we bring you back to nature, don't we?

SURRAGE. Is there anything else that you want?

VALLANCE. Oh! well—I want a commission, of course, and you're the man to give me one. This room, for example—I tell you what—I'll do you a frieze—a frieze of Maenads—for a thousand pounds. You shall give me a trifle on account.

SURRAGE. What is a frieze of Maenads?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. You know what a frieze is, don't you ?  
And you know what Maenads are ?

SURRAGE. I'm sure I ought to know, but I'm not very clear——

VALLANCE. Mad, intoxicated women — frenzied creatures with streaming hair. [*He looks round.*] Capital, capital. Just let me take the measurements. I see the idea.

SURRAGE. But, my dear sir, what the devil do I want with such things ?

VALLANCE. Ah ! Confound it ! That's your simplicity ! You ought to take these things from us on trust and pretend you like them. You'll never be an expert patron.

SURRAGE. I don't like intoxicated women.

VALLANCE [*looking round the room again*]. I'm hardly in the mood for a pastoral. I might do you a procession—an ironic procession.

SURRAGE. Let us leave that, Mr. Vallance.

VALLANCE. Then we come back to the question of the two sovereigns.

SURRAGE. I must decline.

VALLANCE. I wonder why.

SURRAGE. I never subscribe to societies till I have studied their balance-sheets.

VALLANCE. By Jove ! You're pretty hot.

SURRAGE. The point is that I don't understand you. I don't understand you as a friend of my children.

VALLANCE [*impatiently*]. Oh ! as to that—I'm

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

talking frankly to you, more or less frankly—they're another matter.

SURRAGE. You want to flatter me by contempt of them?

VALLANCE. Now, do you know, I believe that's what I'm doing instinctively.

SURRAGE. But surely if they are not what they should be, it's my failure.

VALLANCE. With such a man as you perhaps it is.

SURRAGE. I've let them go. I've let them go their own way. It's strange, it's incredible, but we do. We lose them. Nothing but a little kindness remains. I wanted to see you. I wanted to see their friends. I thought it would help me to know them better. And here you are, you and Mrs. Staines and that other—gentleman. It's all unintelligible to me. There must be more than I can see. I'm not speaking against her. She puzzles me the most, but she's—she's—a wonderful creature.

VALLANCE. Oh! Janey's all right.

SURRAGE. You appear to be very intimate with her.

VALLANCE. Yes, we're rather old friends.

SURRAGE. Well, Mr. Vallance, what do you say to a turn outside? Would you care to follow them to the church?

VALLANCE. How soon is dinner?

SURRAGE. My dear fellow, we'll have it earlier. Can it really be—two sovereigns, did you say?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

[*He brings them out of his pocket and gives them to*  
VALLANCE.] Here you are.

VALLANCE. Many thanks. No hurry for dinner. It's wonderful how a bit of gold in your pocket keeps you up.

SURRAGE. Come on then. Oh! Excuse me for a moment. There's something I must do. [*He rings the bell and then goes to the bureau. Then he gropes about in a puzzled manner.*]

BINDLOSS *comes in.*

VALLANCE. I'll be in the garden, then. [*He goes out.*]

SURRAGE. Quite right. I'll follow you directly. Oh, Bindloss. Wherever did I put—I didn't pay you, did I?

BINDLOSS. No, sir.

SURRAGE. Nor Lees nor James, nor any of them?

BINDLOSS. I think not, sir. In fact I'm sure not.

SURRAGE. I could have sworn I put it there.

BINDLOSS. Yes, sir.

SURRAGE. The money, I mean. Let me see—  
[*He stands thinking.*]

BINDLOSS *is attentive and inscrutable.*

SURRAGE. I couldn't have been mistaken.

BINDLOSS. No, sir.

SURRAGE [*turns to look at him*]. But I must have been.

BINDLOSS. Possibly, sir.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Most extraordinary. [*He stands staring aghast.*]

BINDLOSS. Do you suspect me of taking the money, sir?

SURRAGE. Certainly not, Bindloss.

BINDLOSS. I suppose I am the only servant who has been in since you put it there?

SURRAGE. But did I put it there?

BINDLOSS. Ah! That's the question, sir.

*Curtain.*

## ACT II

*The Hall again—after breakfast the next morning.*

ROSE and VIOLET are in confabulation. ARCHIE looks in.

ROSE. Oh, Archie! come here.

VIOLET. Archie!

ARCHIE. I must look after these people. What are we all going to do to-day?

VIOLET. Archie, there's something queer about it all.

ARCHIE. Queer? How queer?

ROSE. Everybody seems to be holding something back.

VIOLET. And Bindloss looks at them in the most extraordinary way.

ARCHIE. Ah, Bindloss! I think I must talk to him. He seems to be developing an ironical manner.

ROSE. An ironical butler is intolerable.

VIOLET. You'd hardly call him a butler, would you, Rose?

ROSE. I never understand where a footman ends and a butler begins. I suppose a solitary footman is a butler.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. I thought that last night at dinner things were almost brilliant.

ROSE. Yes, but it wasn't comfortable.

VIOLET. My dear Rose, you can't be brilliant and comfortable at the same time.

ARCHIE. As the Americans say—we seem to have bit off rather more than we can chew.

ROSE. Why do you say that, Archie? I'm not at all sure that it isn't going very well.

ARCHIE. If it were, you would be sure.

VIOLET. Well, what's wrong?

ARCHIE. I think Vallance is wrong, I'm not sure that Mrs. Staines isn't wrong. One feels rather safer with Suckling, but he is a bit of a fool.

VIOLET. Archie! He was most amusing. Mr. Vallance was rude to him.

ROSE. Father puzzled me.

ARCHIE. He kept his form very well.

VIOLET. I thought Mr. Vallance was rather nice with him.

ARCHIE. Wants a commission, perhaps.

ROSE. Did you notice father and Mrs. Staines?

VIOLET. At breakfast, do you mean? He's awfully polite to her.

ROSE. Rather more than polite.

ARCHIE. Well, it's time we looked after these people. What are we going to do?

ARCHIE *and* ROSE *go out as* SURRAGE *and*  
SUCKLING *enter.*

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SUCKLING [*to SURRAGE*]. I'll show you what I mean. Now a room like this—as a rule they make country-house theatricals too fussy—if you raise the stage a foot it's enough. Here you are. No—that door's not what I thought it was. You'll have to knock a hole in the wall about here. However, that's a detail. I'll stage-manage, of course.

VIOLET. Oh! how interesting! What's this?

SUCKLING. Your father would like to do a little thing of mine here. I want to see how it goes. Mind you, sir, I shall follow this up with a business proposition. There's money in this. I can get a theatre. If you like to put down a couple of thousand pounds I'll see it through for you. Five per cent. on your money, equal shares. Of course I get my five per cent. on the gross takings as author.

VIOLET. How exciting, father! Are you going to, really?

SURRAGE. Mr. Suckling seems to think so.

SUCKLING. I've always said that the business side of the theatre is the most interesting. I'd have gone in for it myself, but I haven't the head. Of course, mind you, I can sketch out a scheme—and a sound scheme. There's a chance, Mr. Surrage—there's a chance for a man like you. There's no competition—nothing that you would call competition. With an adviser to select the plays—they're duffers, sir, in the theatre business. They're not business men. Now you as a business man—what do you call it?—markets, stocks and shares, you know, bulls and

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

bears—you know what I mean—well, you're among hard-headed people—diamond cut diamond—what? Back me up in this, and it's a soft thing for you—there's not a man in the business with your head.

SURRAGE [*smiling blandly*]. I mightn't like your plays.

SUCKLING. Not your department, sir. I'll see to that.

SURRAGE. Should I engage the actors and actresses?

SUCKLING. No, no, I'd see to all that.

SURRAGE. I should have to look after the box office and the money and tradespeople and so on?

SUCKLING. Well, we shall have to get a proper manager, you know.

SURRAGE. But what should I do?

SUCKLING. Oh! you'd—you'd draw cheques and all that kind of thing.

SURRAGE. Yes, it's very tempting, Mr. Suckling.

SUCKLING. My dear sir, it's the biggest thing you can do. You want to get into the swim—the arts, you know—run a theatre. That's the short cut. Modern plays, but not stodgy.

SURRAGE. I don't think I want to get into the arts.

SUCKLING. But Miss Violet and the others do. [*To VIOLET.*] Don't you? Take my tip, sir, and don't try collecting pictures. Giving commissions to these living chaps is worse still. I don't want to say a word against Vallance—he's quite a curiosity himself—but it's slow work, trying the picture-con-

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

noisseur game, and devilish expensive. The theatre for a cheap splash.

SURRAGE [*to VIOLET*]. Well, what do you think, my dear?

VIOLET. It would be awfully exciting, father. I wish you would. I'd like you to do some Ibsen and Tchekoff.

SUCKLING. Oh! No, no, no. My dear young lady, you're on the wrong tack. That's no good. Mind you, they're all right in their way. Pioneers if you like, and they have their little booms, but we go for bigger things.

VIOLET. But are your things bigger, Mr. Suckling?

SUCKLING. We take the cream off them. We're the practical men.

VIOLET. Oh! Then you're not original?

SUCKLING. Well, we go in for the best of everything.

VIOLET. You're disappointing, Mr. Suckling.

SUCKLING. No, no. But, really—I appeal to you, sir—don't misjudge me—I——

SURRAGE [*looking at his watch*]. Anybody going to church?

SUCKLING. Church? We went to see it yesterday.

VIOLET. I must find Mrs. Staines. [*She goes out.*]

SUCKLING [*as he follows her out*]. I say, don't misunderstand me.

BINDLOSS *enters*.

SUCKLING. Well, Bindloss?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

BINDLOSS. I am sorry, sir, to have to ask you to accept a month's notice.

SURRAGE. Why?

BINDLOSS. Personally, I should prefer to leave at once.

SURRAGE. Are you troubling yourself over the disappearance of that money?

BINDLOSS. It hardly becomes me, sir, to give explanations.

SURRAGE. I think it would become you very well.

BINDLOSS. As I am still in your employment, sir, I do not wish to make reflections on your guests.

SURRAGE. What is your cause for leaving?

BINDLOSS. If you could grant me my discharge, sir, and permit me to speak to you as man to man, I would tell you.

SURRAGE [*kindly*]. Speak to me as man to man, Mr. Bindloss.

BINDLOSS. I have to speak to you about Mr. Vallance, sir.

SURRAGE. Well?

BINDLOSS. In the course of my duty I removed Mr. Vallance's trousers from his room to brush them; and I thought a little pressing would do them no harm.

SURRAGE. Exactly.

BINDLOSS. I think that the sum you missed amounted to about thirteen pounds—say thirteen pounds and odd shillings.

SURRAGE. Bindloss!

BINDLOSS. Am I right, sir?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. No. It was eleven pounds and a shilling or two.

BINDLOSS. That's strange.

SURRAGE. What's strange?

BINDLOSS [*puzzled*]. He had thirteen pounds, four-and-six in his pocket.

SURRAGE [*indignantly*]. Do you mean to say that you examined his pockets? You may certainly consider yourself dismissed.

BINDLOSS. In the course of my duty, sir, I was endeavouring to restore a little shape to Mr. Vallance's trousers by means of the press. As you are aware, sir, the upper part of the trousers hangs down. Some money fell out. I thought it was my duty to count it.

SURRAGE. Did it all fall out? I mean—was there nothing left in the pocket?

BINDLOSS. In the circumstances, I thought it right to ascertain that.

SURRAGE. Well?

BINDLOSS. The entire sum was thirteen-four-six.

SURRAGE. Is there anything remarkable in that?

BINDLOSS. I find it remarkable.

SURRAGE. I will not pretend that I don't see your drift. You were proposing to charge Mr. Vallance with theft.

BINDLOSS. I don't understand where he got the other two pounds.

SURRAGE. Why shouldn't he have had all this with him when he came?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

BINDLOSS. I have very good reason to suppose that he had not, sir.

SURRAGE. What's the reason?

BINDLOSS. Mr. Vallance endeavoured to borrow a sovereign from me, sir.

SURRAGE. The devil!

VALLANCE *strolls in, sees them together, hesitates, and determines to hold his ground.*

BINDLOSS. Shall I go, sir?

SURRAGE. Perhaps I had better have a few words with Mr. Vallance privately.

BINDLOSS. To make up some kind of a story.

SURRAGE [*after a pause*]. You may stay.

VALLANCE. What's this?

SURRAGE. I'm extremely sorry, Mr. Vallance. Some money is missing from my desk here, and Bindloss accuses you of taking it. It is due to you that you should know this.

VALLANCE. Perhaps he took it himself.

BINDLOSS. There! You see what he is. I beg your pardon, sir. You need have no pity on him now. I understand you. You're a gentleman, and you've your duty to a guest. He's ready to ruin me. I ask you for justice.

VALLANCE. Settle your own affairs. [*He makes for the door.*]

SURRAGE. Stay, Mr. Vallance. We'd better have this out. Bindloss, let me tell you this. Mr. Vallance borrowed two pounds from me yesterday.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

BINDLOSS. Ah! That explains everything. That makes the amount.

SURRAGE. But he borrowed after this money had gone.

VALLANCE. Yes. How do you get over that?

BINDLOSS [*bewildered*]. He's capable of anything.

SURRAGE. Mr. Vallance, I'm in a difficulty. You're my guest and I can hardly cross-examine you. But Bindloss has his rights, too.

BINDLOSS. Let me cross-examine him.

SURRAGE [*to VALLANCE*]. I think it's fair that you should reply to anything he asks you. He has himself to defend.

VALLANCE. Well?

BINDLOSS. How much money did you bring here?

VALLANCE. Go to the devil!

BINDLOSS. I have explained to my master—I mean Mr. Surrage—how I came to know that you had thirteen-four-six in your pocket.

VALLANCE. Underhand sort of chaps you lackeys are.

BINDLOSS. If you had all that money in your pocket, why did you want to borrow a sovereign from me?

VALLANCE. I always borrow anything I can. I'm sure to want it some day. It's a kind of thrift. If I had all that in my pocket, why did I borrow two pounds from your master?

BINDLOSS. Well, that's the only thing I don't understand.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Think it over. [*He is going.*]

SURRAGE. Come, come, Mr. Vallance, we'd better thresh this out.

VALLANCE. Do you think I took your money?

SURRAGE. Yes.

VALLANCE [*after a pause*]. You're quite right. I did.

SURRAGE. Why?

VALLANCE. Because I wanted it.

SURRAGE. That seems simple.

VALLANCE. I am simple.

SURRAGE. It baffles me.

BINDLOSS [*after a pause*]. Do you require me any further, sir?

SURRAGE. Not for the present, Bindloss. And—you haven't talked of this?

BINDLOSS. Yes, I have.

SURRAGE. Please say nothing further till I see you again.

BINDLOSS *is silent.*

Do you hear?

BINDLOSS. He was ready to put it on me.

SURRAGE. I give you express orders not to speak of this till I see you again.

BINDLOSS. Very well, sir. [*He is going, but turns round.*] I can't understand why he borrowed that two pounds, sir.

SURRAGE [*to VALLANCE*]. Why did you?

VALLANCE. Ah! yes. That was my cunning.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

That was clever, wasn't it? I did that just to put you off the scent. I'm simple, but I have ideas.

SURRAGE. What do you mean by it all? Why did you do it? And why do you acknowledge it like this?

BINDLOSS. And why did you try to put it on me?

VALLANCE. Oh! as to that—you're such a smug-looking fellow. I'd have no compunction in hurting you. You'll never be a human being till you've been battered and soiled.

BINDLOSS. Listen to that. What kind of a person is this you've got hold of, sir? A gentleman who comes here with an old bag—and about half a pyjama and a shirt in it—and borrows and steals and insults us. What's come to the house? As for the lady——

SURRAGE. Silence!

VALLANCE. Ah! Now, if I'd got her to take the money that beautiful chivalry of yours wouldn't have let you touch her.

BINDLOSS. I believe they're all in a gang.

SURRAGE [*anxiously*]. Are you all in a gang?~

VALLANCE [*laughing*]. Poor Janey! You'd better leave us alone—get rid of us. We're not in your line.

SURRAGE. I'm trying to understand you.

VALLANCE. And you find it interesting, Mr. Surrage?

SURRAGE. I mean to understand you.

VALLANCE. Well—apply your business principles.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

Mind you, I've no contempt for business. Now, that two pounds that I borrowed from you—clever notion, wasn't it? Don't you think I should make a business man?

BINDLOSS. Listen to that.

SURRAGE. Leave us, Bindloss.

BINDLOSS *goes*.

VALLANCE. Now, wasn't it quite business-like?

SURRAGE. I am a man of business. Do you think I am a thief?

VALLANCE. Yes, you roll it out finely, and I won't say that I feel nothing at all when you speak like that. With people like you I'm just a predatory animal, I suppose, but I've dim recollections of a time when—— Oh! don't be afraid that I'm going to talk about praying at my mother's knee.

SURRAGE. What's your secret? What are you? What are you doing here as a friend of my children?

VALLANCE. Ah! Those poor chicks. I told them it wouldn't do.

SURRAGE. And you are a great artist?

VALLANCE [*arrogantly*]. Hardly less.

SURRAGE. And what is it? It's painting pictures, I know. But what's the point? Do you make them prettier than other people?

VALLANCE. Oh! heavens!

SURRAGE. Well, I mean to understand.

VALLANCE. You're the most wonderful person I ever met.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. If that's flattery it won't serve you.

VALLANCE. I shan't flatter you.

SURRAGE. And my son and daughters are just fools?

VALLANCE. You're no fool, you know.

SURRAGE. What do you expect me to do?

VALLANCE. To do?

SURRAGE. The obvious thing is to send for the police. Perhaps Bindloss has done so already.

VALLANCE. Then you'd have to say you gave me the money.

SURRAGE. Give it back—all but the two pounds.

VALLANCE. No.

SURRAGE. What?

VALLANCE. I want it more than you do.

SURRAGE. What foolery! Give me that money.

VALLANCE. I won't.

SURRAGE. Are you an anarchist? Is there any theory about it? Or are you just a robber?

VALLANCE. I want the money.

SURRAGE. And you presume on my good nature—my weakness? Give it me. [*He strikes the table with his fist.*]

VALLANCE. Go to hell!

SURRAGE. Then I send for the police. [*He makes for the bell and confronts MRS. STAINES as she enters.*]

MRS. S. The police!

SURRAGE. This man is a thief. I am sorry if he's a friend of yours.

MRS. S. A thief?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. He has stolen my money; he tried to put the guilt on my servant; and now he won't give it up.

MRS. S. You tried to put it on another?

VALLANCE. The fellow looked so smug.

MRS. S. He's a child.

SURRAGE. Is that the explanation?

MRS. S. I think, Mr. Surrage, that if there's a Sunday train it would be good if we all went away and left you in peace.

SURRAGE. Should I be in peace?

MRS. S. Why not?

SURRAGE. All manner of things are disturbing me. I can't have a quiet mind now. I want to understand.

MRS. S. To understand what?

SURRAGE. Him—you. What have you to do with him? What is it that my children have launched at me? I hear them talk a lot of their art and their artists, their friends who are this and that, and the people in the swim, and it didn't seem to me very important. I'm a quiet man at home. And then you come and you mystify me, and I can't get away from it like this. What sort of a world is it where a man takes my money and acknowledges he's taken it and won't give it up? And then you tell me he's a child. And you've been telling me he's a great man. Is this progress, or civilization, or what?

MRS. S. [*to VALLANCE*]. If you have his money give it up.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE [*empties his pocket carelessly on the table*].  
Stop! Two pounds. [*He takes them up.*]

MRS. S. Two pounds?

VALLANCE. He lent me them. [*To SURRAGE.*] It was rather smart of me, wasn't it? [*To MRS. S.*] Just a little business transaction.

BINDLOSS *enters.*

BINDLOSS. The constable is waiting in the servants' hall, sir, if you should want him. He was passing, and I thought he might be useful.

SURRAGE. What have you said to him?

BINDLOSS. I have been guarded in my statements, sir.

SURRAGE *looks at* MRS. STAINES.

MRS. S. [*in a low, firm voice*]. You must not.

SURRAGE [*to BINDLOSS*]. Give him a drink and send him away.

BINDLOSS *hesitates.*

It will be worth your while.

BINDLOSS. I am not prepared to compound a felony, sir.

SURRAGE. There has been a mistake. I have no charge to bring.

BINDLOSS. Oh! Perhaps this lady——

SURRAGE. Silence! Be off!

BINDLOSS *goes.*

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

MRS. S. Thank you.

SURRAGE. Mr. Vallance, you have been within measurable distance of a jail.

VALLANCE. I've missed a remarkable experience.

SURRAGE. I can hardly believe that you'll miss it altogether.

MRS. S. You've been very generous and very kind. I'm deeply sorry that we've given you all this trouble.

SURRAGE. What have you to do with it? Why do you associate yourself with him?

MRS. S. Oh, you may as well rank us together. We're different from you. They oughtn't to have brought us here. We've different thoughts and ways.

SURRAGE. That's what I want to make out. I'm ready to hear reason. But you are not like him.

MRS. S. I'm more like him than like you.

SURRAGE. But he's a thief.

MRS. S. Of course, I don't do stupid things like that.

SURRAGE. Stupid!

MRS. S. He's not quite sane. He's terribly reckless. He wants some one to take care of him. Oh! our morals are all wrong, of course. And, really, one feels it with a great, simple, charming man like you.

VALLANCE [*laughing sardonically*]. Take care! She's making up to you.

SURRAGE. You have known this fellow a long time?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

MRS. S. A long time.

SURRAGE. You didn't know he was coming here?

MRS. S. It's a chance meeting.

SURRAGE. Then you hadn't been seeing him lately?

MRS. S. No. We had—separated.

SURRAGE. Separated!

MRS. S. Perhaps you ought to know, Mr. Surrage, that I was his wife.

VALLANCE [*testily*]. Mistress—mistress.

SURRAGE [*stares from one to another*]. Which?

MRS. S. It doesn't matter. [*To VALLANCE*.] It's cruel of you.

SURRAGE. You were his——

VALLANCE. A bit more for you to digest.

SURRAGE. Why did you leave him?

MRS. S. He left me.

SURRAGE. Why did you leave her?

VALLANCE. I was tired of her.

MRS. S. It's a shame to say that. We quarrelled.

VALLANCE. Observe the feminine distinction. Well, I got tired of you suddenly and violently. Is that better? I admit, Mr. Surrage, that as women go she's not a bore. No—Janey's not a bad sort.

MRS. S. You got on finely without me, didn't you?

VALLANCE. As a manager and housewife you have points. Of course I came to grief.

MRS. S. He's just a naughty child that wants looking after.

SURRAGE. I do my best to understand you. [*To MRS. S.*] You didn't choose all that? What are

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

you? Where did you come from? What chance have you had? I can't condemn you. You baffle me. You seem all that's good and beautiful and then—the most horrible things—his mistress? He's a great man, is he? Paints wonderful pictures? But what's the good of a trick like that? What's his character? What is he? A surly brute on the surface—a liar—a thief. Do you like his world better than mine? Do you choose such a man voluntarily before—before——

VALLANCE. He's making you a proposal. The good angel and the bad.

MRS. S. You don't understand one another.

VALLANCE. Yes, yes. I understand him well enough. His simplicity's good. He's quite good of his kind.

SURRAGE. Thank you. I can't admire your simplicity, though I perceive it. The simplicity of the robber, the sponge, the seducer——

VALLANCE. Nonsense. I'm a busy man. I haven't time to be a seducer. I just take what I want.

SURRAGE. I can't see why you should be allowed to exist.

VALLANCE. I do my work. The rest doesn't matter.

SURRAGE. And what is your work? To paint drunken women round the walls of this room? Or any other foul thing that I choose to order?

VALLANCE. That you choose to order?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Or any of your patrons.

VALLANCE. I'll see you in hell before I'd take your orders. I paint what I like. It's for you to take it or not.

MRS. S. Tell him of Lord Stanger.

SURRAGE. Lord Stanger?

MRS. S. Do you want to know why we quarrelled? It was about Lord Stanger's ball-room.

SURRAGE. His ball-room?

MRS. S. We were as hard up as we could be, and he got this splendid commission. It was wealth and fame, it was a great chance. And he wouldn't do what was wanted, and so it all came to nothing.

VALLANCE. The fellow wanted me to alter my design.

SURRAGE. And why didn't you?

VALLANCE. Here's the honest man. Look at him! He asks that.

SURRAGE [*to MRS. S.*]. You quarrelled over that?

MRS. S. I wanted him to give way. It was such a chance. And we were pretty nearly starving.

SURRAGE. You are not starving now. You came here in a motor-car. How is that? Oh no, no. I've no right to ask.

MRS. S. [*takes no notice of this*]. He wouldn't give way.

SURRAGE. Why not? What did it matter? What was the point?

VALLANCE. The point is this, you huckster—you reckon yourself an honest man. You tradesmen are

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

honest with your customers. I'm honest with myself.

SURRAGE. Do you think I'm not honest with myself?

VALLANCE. It matters precious little whether you are or not. Keep your tradesman virtues. You're not a man of genius.

MRS. S. Do you understand? He wouldn't give way.

SURRAGE. I see a kind of stupid honesty in it. But he asked me for a job.

VALLANCE. I'd ask anybody for a job, but I'll do it my own way.

SURRAGE. Nonsense. Here—you shall do this—what do you call it?—frieze—round this room. You shall have a thousand pounds for it. Just take my orders. Haymakers—a procession of haymakers.

VALLANCE *laughs contemptuously and goes out.*

MRS. S. He wouldn't do it for a million.

SURRAGE. Still, I can't see his charm.

MRS. S. It's all very horrible for you. It'll all pass away like a bad dream.

SURRAGE. It's you that matters, it's you that perplexes me.

MRS. S. I'm not worth bothering about.

SURRAGE. Yes—you know I've old-fashioned notions of women and everything else. You'll forgive me when I tell you—I feel—it's absurd—I feel

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

that I ought to help you—to do something—to save you. Yes, to save you.

MRS. S. I don't know that I want to be saved.

SURRAGE. It seems a dreadful impertinence. I'm not fit to judge you, and I want to save you.

MRS. S. What from?

SURRAGE. From fellows like that, from nameless horrors, from an abyss. Oh! I suppose I'm talking nonsense. It does seem nonsense when I look at you. What have you been doing since you left him? I've no right to ask.

MRS. S. You'd better not ask.

SURRAGE. I don't ask questions like an impertinent child. Do you defend yourself? Have you a case?

MRS. S. Oh! Defend! I don't know.

SURRAGE. You can't be bad. I can't think ill of you. And yet you seem to accept it. You're a light creature. You didn't even help that fellow when he needed it.

MRS. S. We were starving, I tell you. [*She turns away in agitation.*]

SURRAGE. And you've left him. You don't starve now.

MRS. S. You're curious? You want to know how I live?

SURRAGE. I've no right to ask.

MRS. S. And I shan't tell you. Mr. Surrage, I shall go to-day if I can—if not, to-morrow. While I stay I shall behave myself. When we go I hope you'll forget the whole thing. I'm sorry that it

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

must have been intensely disagreeable to you. We ought never to have come. Not one of us. Not even that silly young Suckling.

SURRAGE. Disagreeable for me? Yes. I'd been getting rather dull, though. And it's been horrible for you, I suppose?

MRS. S. Parts of it; but—I'm glad I came, too.

SURRAGE. Ah! Yes; you've met him again.

MRS. S. And I've met you.

SURRAGE. Me!

MRS. S. Yes. I never knew anybody like you before.

SURRAGE. You think I'm a pleasant old fellow and a great fool?

MRS. S. Oh no! I'm the fool. We're the fools. There are some things you don't know about, but you're a wonderfully right person.

SURRAGE. If you think that, then why——

MRS. S. Oh! It's too late now to start over again.

*ROSE and VIOLET enter through window.*

ROSE. Oh, there you are, Mrs. Staines. Now, what would you like to do?

SURRAGE. Mrs. Staines is going to church with me.

ROSE. Church! [*ROSE and VIOLET in attitudes of surprise.*]

SURRAGE. Yes, church. We're going to have a real old-fashioned Sunday.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ROSE. I didn't know you went to church, Mrs. Staines.

MRS. S. I don't. But I'll do it to please your father.

ROSE. I'm sure he won't wish you to do it against your inclination.

MRS. S. I rather like the idea.

SURRAGE. Get on your bonnet, then. Be down in five minutes. Where's my top hat?

SURRAGE *and* MRS. STAINES *go out*.

VIOLET. Well!

ROSE. I don't like it.

VIOLET. There can't be anything in it.

ROSE. I wish we'd never asked her.

VIOLET. Or Mr. Vallance either.

ROSE. Oh! I don't know. He is really very distinguished, but we don't know much about her.

VIOLET. I think father's got his knife into Mr. Vallance.

ROSE. Nonsense, Violet. When I saw him five minutes ago I asked him what he had been doing, and he said he had been having a chat with father.

VIOLET. Well, what of that?

ROSE. And he said father was a very remarkable man.

VIOLET. But is he a remarkable man?

ROSE. Oh, I dare say Mr. Vallance wanted to be nice.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. It's the first time, then. Here's father.

SURRAGE *enters brushing a top hat with his sleeve.*

ROSE. You and Mr. Vallance have been getting on quite well together, I hear, father.

SURRAGE. Who told you that?

ROSE. Well, he said something of the kind.

SURRAGE. Very good of him.

ROSE. Father, I'm a little doubtful whether we were quite discreet in asking Mrs. Staines here.

SURRAGE. Was it quite discreet to ask Mr. Vallance?

ROSE. Well, of course, he has a European reputation. But Mrs. Staines——

SURRAGE. She hasn't a European reputation?

ROSE. We really don't know much about her, or who she is, or——

SURRAGE. But, my dear, it's not a question of who she is, but what she is.

MRS. S. *appears at the door.* SURRAGE *starts briskly forward.*

Hah! Ready.

*Curtain.*

### ACT III

*Monday morning—the same Scene. ROSE, VIOLET, and ARCHIE in anxious discussion.*

ROSE. But this is impossible, Archie. It's impossible.

VIOLET. Well, Mr. Suckling's been telling me something about them.

ARCHIE. Bindloss had the policeman there ready.

ROSE. And father wouldn't—wouldn't—

ARCHIE. His guest, you know.

ROSE. Is there no room for mistake?

ARCHIE. Not a bit. He's a common thief.

VIOLET. Not a common one, Archie. There must be something interesting about it.

ARCHIE. Nonsense.

ROSE. It's horrible. It's disgusting.

VIOLET. Archie, this is the right Mr. Vallance, isn't it?

ARCHIE. What do you mean?

VIOLET. We don't know him very well. Can we have got hold of a wrong one?

ARCHIE. We have certainly got hold of a wrong 'un.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ROSE. Don't be vulgar, Archie. After all I'm not sure that this isn't very interesting, as Violet says. Men like Vallance are not to be judged by ordinary standards. I think I shall ask him for his point of view.

ARCHIE. Oh! Let's get rid of them and be done. I was a fool ever to take up with this kind of thing. It's not my business; it's not my interest. A man at the Bar doesn't want to know these people. It was you that bustled us into it, Rose. Let's get the people out of the house and breathe freely.

VIOLET. You're not speaking of Mr. Suckling? He's very nice.

ARCHIE. Oh! Suckling——

ROSE. I don't see why you should put it all on me. I told you I didn't like the idea of asking Mrs. Staines without knowing something more about her.

ARCHIE. You never said such a thing.

ROSE. I hinted it pretty plainly.

ARCHIE. What! Violet, did she ever——

VIOLET. Of course she didn't. What rubbish, Rose!

ARCHIE. The Governor takes it all uncommonly well, but he's scoring off us frightfully.

ROSE. Oh! but that's what worries me. He takes it far too well. I believe he's perfectly infatuated with that woman.

ARCHIE. Where is she?

VIOLET. She had breakfast in her room.

ARCHIE. I know. She ought to be down directly, if she's going by this train.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ROSE. She must go by it.

ARCHIE. I want Vallance out of the house.

VIOLET. I suppose they'll go off together. Mr. Suckling says——

ARCHIE. Oh, Suckling—Bindloss says they're a gang. He's been up all night.

ROSE. Bindloss has ?

ARCHIE. Yes. He looks like an owl this morning. He's been sitting up guarding the silver with that old sword from the library. He says he'll do his duty while he's here.

VIOLET. Bindloss doesn't mean to say that Mr. Suckling has any connection with this affair ?

ARCHIE. Oh, don't talk of Suckling. He's a cypher ; he's a harmless ass ; he's a make-weight.

VIOLET. I think we might ask him to stay a day or two longer. You know he's the only success out of the lot, and I suggested asking him.

ROSE. You didn't, Violet. He came as Archie's friend.

ARCHIE. Well, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Let him go. Let's end this nightmare. Let's get thoroughly awake. And I've done with your Bohemian circles and your artists. I've had enough of them.

ROSE. I haven't. You've no thoroughness, Archie. You never cared sincerely for art—or life either.

VIOLET. Don't talk stuff, Rose. Where are those men ?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. Packing their bags, I hope. Who's this?

SUCKLING *enters.*

SUCKLING. I say—this is a bit thick, isn't it?

ROSE. What is thick, Mr. Suckling?

SUCKLING. I knew something was up, but that fellow of yours—Bindloss—he's been pitching me a rare tale.

ARCHIE. You've been talking to him.

SUCKLING. Well, he's been talking to me.

ARCHIE. Why the devil should he talk to you?

ROSE. Archie, remember that Mr. Suckling is still our guest.

VIOLET. We were hoping that you'd stay a few days, Mr. Suckling.

ARCHIE. Mr. Suckling is a busy man, Violet. We mustn't take up too much of his time.

SUCKLING. Oh! As to that—I must say I'd just as soon not take the same train as that chap. People might think we'd all been hoofed out together. But as I was saying—this fellow Bindloss——

ARCHIE. But why do you go to Bindloss?

SUCKLING. Well, now, Surrage, you're not reasonable. Why do I go to Bindloss? Is he your man, or is he not? If you must know, I was offering him five bob, and he nearly chucked it at my head. I said "What do you expect? Do American millionaires put up here?" And, mind you, I thought if I gave more it wouldn't be fair on Vallance—I doubt if he could raise half a crown. Well, Bindloss was

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

perfectly mad at this, and began talking about a gang of thieves. He said——

ROSE. Perhaps you had better not say what he said, Mr. Suckling.

VIOLET. We know all about it.

SUCKLING. And don't you think it a bit—thick?

VIOLET. Very, very thick.

ARCHIE. Suckling, when you get back to town you'll just keep as quiet as you can, won't you?

SUCKLING. Oh! well—it'd make rather a good yarn, you know.

ROSE. But, Mr. Suckling, you surely can't intend to——

VIOLET. You won't say anything about it, will you?

SUCKLING. Nothing but what's all right, of course. I'll take care

ROSE. But——

ARCHIE. Look here, Suckling, are you going to make a tale of this? I tell you it's most infernally——

ROSE. Hush! Archie. I'm sure Mr. Suckling won't say a word about it.

SUCKLING. Oh! It'll be all right.'

ARCHIE. I don't know what you mean by all right, but——

ROSE. Now, Archie—Mr. Suckling, there's no need for you to go yet. Mayn't we have the pleasure of your company for a day or two?

VIOLET. Oh, do, Mr. Suckling.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SUCKLING. I think I'd better be getting back to town—unless your father had any notion of—  
Hullo!

VALLANCE *enters.*

VALLANCE. The conspirators discovered.

VIOLET. Conspirators!

VALLANCE. Yes, the curious thing is that you all look guilty.

SUCKLING. I like that.

VALLANCE. And the fact is that you are guilty.

ROSE. In what way, Mr. Vallance?

VALLANCE. All sorts of hatred and uncharitableness. Folly and blindness and vanity and stupidity.

ARCHIE. You say that to us!

VALLANCE. Why not? You've been saying plenty of things about me.

VIOLET. How do you know?

VALLANCE. It's sufficient that I do know.

ARCHIE. We've no wish to bandy words with you, Mr. Vallance. You are still our guest and when you leave we're hardly likely to meet again—at least, I hope not.

VALLANCE. Why do you hope not?

ARCHIE. I think we won't go into that.

VALLANCE. Why did you ask me here? You thought I was a bit of a celebrity—European reputation and all that—a certain amount of fudge about that European reputation. I came; I needn't trouble you with my reasons for coming. Ask your

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

father. Oh! but I was dreadfully wicked. I was hard up and I took your father's money. Well, it was a preposterous thing to do. I am preposterous; the whole thing's preposterous. One does such things out of contempt for people like you. I happened to be reckless just now.

SUCKLING. Most immoral, by Jove!

VALLANCE. Did they ask me here because I was moral?

VIOLET. We supposed you were a decent member of society.

VALLANCE. You took no steps to ascertain whether I was or not. You were just lion-hunting. Well, you find that besides being a great artist I'm a thief. But I'm a human being. Why aren't you immensely moved and sympathetic? Why don't you see it all as tragical or strange or something? Your father's worth the lot of you. He is amusing.

SURRAGE *enters.*

Ah! Mr. Surrage, we're just talking about you.

ARCHIE. Mr. Vallance is lecturing us on our morals.

VALLANCE. Why not? You've no more morals than I have—rather less, I dare say. A few habits. Well, Mr. Surrage, I must thank you for this charming week-end. Is the carriage or the prison-van or whatever it is, ready? Where's Janey?

SURRAGE. We have no servant of that name.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Do you know, I should rather like to paint your portrait.

SURRAGE. A family group, perhaps.

VALLANCE [*looking at the others*]. It couldn't be made credible.

ROSE. Why not?

MRS. STAINES *enters hatted and cloaked*.

VALLANCE. Hah! At last.

MRS. S. [*to ROSE*]. Good-bye!

ROSE. Good-bye! [*Cold hand-shaking with the three.*]

MRS. S. *bows to SUCKLING*.

MRS. S. [*to SURRAGE*]. We've been a dreadful incubus. You'll be glad to have peace again.

SURRAGE. I don't know. I've had a good deal of peace. One gets rather tired of peace.

MRS. S. Good-bye!

VALLANCE [*rather airily*]. Good-bye, sir! It's been quite interesting.

SURRAGE [*to MRS. S.*]. You are going—you are going—with him?

MRS. S. We take the same train.

VALLANCE. Come, Janey.

ARCHIE. I'll see if the carriage is there.

*There is a general movement to the door.*

SUCKLING [*to SURRAGE*]. If you've any notion of going in for that thing——

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. I haven't, Mr. Suckling. Good-bye !

SUCKLING. Oh ! but I'm not going by this train.

SURRAGE [*to VALLANCE*]. But you are ?

VALLANCE. Of course. Janey and I are going together.

SURRAGE. Perhaps I may have a word with her first ? Mrs. Staines, may I ?

MRS. S. Certainly, Mr. Surrage.

*The OTHERS stand expectantly.*

SURRAGE. I mean alone.

ROSE. Father——

VALLANCE. Oh ! Come on.

MRS. S. I'll follow you.

*The OTHERS go out, ROSE and VIOLET only after a peremptory gesture from their father, leaving SURRAGE and MRS. S. alone.*

Well ?

SURRAGE. You are going with him ?

MRS. S. It seems so.

SURRAGE. You are going back to him ?

MRS. S. Well, isn't that what you think right ?

SURRAGE. Why don't you marry him ?

MRS. S. Well, the fact is he's got a wife somewhere.

SURRAGE. Oh ! it's intolerable.

MRS. S. Why will you discuss it ?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. I can't get you out of my house and out of my mind like this. I've been a quiet man. I've had very little experience. I've not judged people. My children have left me alone very much. I'm not blaming them—they wanted me to have you and the others here, and I was curious. I've got rather dull.

MRS. S. Get rid of us. Forget all about us.

SURRAGE. Vallance puzzles me, of course, but I can almost understand him. But you——

MRS. S. Why should you concern yourself with me?

SURRAGE. I don't like to let you go.

MRS. S. Take care, my friend. Take care.

SURRAGE. I've been careful all my life. I've never done anything really rash.

MRS. S. Don't begin.

SURRAGE. You think me a harmless old man.

MRS. S. I think it's time for me to go.

SURRAGE. Not with that fellow.

MRS. S. Why not? You don't understand.

SURRAGE. But I want to. It's maddening—this mystery. You're a beautiful woman, a charming woman, and yet—you can't be bad, and yet——

MRS. S. Really, Mr. Surrage, it's too late to discuss that—or too soon.

SURRAGE. For me to let you go without a struggle would be baseness—unspeakable baseness.

MRS. S. How can you prevent it?

SURRAGE. Stay. Stay here.

MRS. S. Here?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Will you marry me? I'm younger than you think.

MRS. S. Amazing.

SURRAGE. Marry me. You'll be safe. I think you'll be happy.

MRS. S. Oh! how charming of you! You are a chivalrous gentleman, indeed. But you are just a little absurd. You would marry me to save me from you don't know what. And I'm the most unsuitable person in the world. It's wildly romantic of you. It's beautiful.

SURRAGE. You'll do it? By Jove——

MRS. S. Don't fear. Don't fear. You're safe.

SURRAGE. Safe?

MRS. S. I shan't take advantage of your generosity.

SURRAGE. You'll go, then?

MRS. S. I must go.

SURRAGE. With him?

MRS. S. With him.

SURRAGE. You left him.

MRS. S. Don't speak of that. He has no money and no friends.

SURRAGE. I'll give him money. He shall have a thousand pounds. He shall paint his drunken women here. Money?

MRS. S. We live like the sparrows.

SURRAGE. Don't go.

MRS. S. I must——

SURRAGE. But it's wrong. It's wrong.

MRS. S. Yes, I dare say it is, but I must go.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Ah! It's too late. I'm too old.

MRS. S. Why! You're as young as you can be.

SURRAGE. That's what I feel. I could be. You talk of my generosity, you think I want to sacrifice myself. I've just fallen in love with you like a schoolboy.

MRS. S. You're beautiful. I'm afraid of you.

SURRAGE. Could you? Can you?

MRS. S. No, no, no.

SURRAGE. I offer what I have.

MRS. S. You're not my sort.

SURRAGE. But I live and learn.

MRS. S. It would spoil you.

SURRAGE. I'll chance that.

MRS. S. It's impossible. It's impossible.

SURRAGE. Now you're moved, I see. It is possible.

VALLANCE *appears at the door.*

VALLANCE. What's going on here?

SURRAGE. Be off. Keep out.

MRS. S. Come here.

VALLANCE *advances.*

VALLANCE. Are you coming?

MRS. S. Yes.

SURRAGE. No.

VALLANCE. What do you mean?

SURRAGE. She stays.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Stays? What do you mean by that?

SURRAGE. I've asked her to marry me, and she will.

VALLANCE *bursts into startled, incredulous laughter.*

MRS. S. Why do you laugh?

VALLANCE. I oughtn't to laugh. I keep forgetting that he's a wonderful person. Stay and marry him, Janey. He might amuse you for a time.

MRS. S. You've no right to say that.

VALLANCE. Yes. I'm the only one that has a right to say it.

SURRAGE. You scoundrel! If you say it again I'll throw you out of the house.

VALLANCE. Now you're becoming conventional.

MRS. S. Good-bye, Mr. Surrage!

SURRAGE. I'm all in the dark now. This fellow spoils it. He perplexes me again. What are you? What kind of woman are you?

MRS. S. If you understand how impossible I am—how bad I am, you'll be satisfied?

SURRAGE. No, no. Tell me nothing.

MRS. S. Ah! well! Keep your illusions.

VALLANCE. Pretty well riddled they must be, I should think.

SURRAGE. May I ask you to leave us?

VALLANCE. Not without her. I want her to come with me, and you're a bit—incalculable.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE [*turning to* MRS. S.]. Then choose. Choose between us.

*She looks at him in some agitation, shakes her head, and rapidly leaves the room.*

VALLANCE. You've done very well. You've made a good show.

SURRAGE. Good-bye, Mr. Vallance!

VALLANCE. Good-bye! It's been worth coming.

SURRAGE. You are very good.

*They shake hands, and VALLANCE goes out.*

*SURRAGE sits down. SUCKLING enters.*

SUCKLING. Oh, I say—I don't know whether you've thought about going in for that thing—we might get up a little syndicate——

SURRAGE. Go to the devil!

SUCKLING. Here, I say! Have you gone off your nut now? That's not quite the remark to make to me.

SURRAGE. I beg your pardon. Consider it postponed till you're just outside the gate.

SUCKLING. Well, now, you're not mixing me up with those other people? I could tell you——

SURRAGE. Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't tell me.

SUCKLING. No—quite right. I should feel the same in your place. And I think you ought to talk to that fellow of yours, Bindloss. The way he speaks to me is—well, it's not the thing.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE [*rings the bell*]. I will speak to him.

SUCKLING. Oh, I don't want any unpleasantness. Just a hint, you know. I don't want to make trouble.

BINDLOSS *enters*.

SURRAGE. Bindloss, Mr. Suckling wants you to pack for him. Mr. Suckling is compelled to leave at once——

SUCKLING. Here, I say——

SURRAGE. But we shall hope to see him here again soon.

BINDLOSS. Very good, sir. Excuse me, sir. There's just a little matter that I think I ought to mention.

SURRAGE. Well?

BINDLOSS. Possibly you may remember that Mr. Archie lent Mr. Vallance a pair of shoes?

SURRAGE. Yes. Well?

BINDLOSS. He's gone off with them.

SURRAGE. Oh, confound it! Mr. Archie gave them to him.

BINDLOSS. Certainly, sir.

*He retires with a gesture of incredulity. As he goes out, ROSE, VIOLET, and ARCHIE enter. SUCKLING meets VIOLET at the door, and they talk and go out together.*

ARCHIE. Well, father, I'm afraid our week-end

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

party wasn't a great success from your point of view.

SURRAGE. Was it from yours?

ROSE. It was a humiliating failure.

SURRAGE. I did my best for you. I tried to approach these people without prejudice.

ARCHIE. Good heavens, sir! Nobody can accuse you of prejudice.

SURRAGE. You asked me for liberality—for an open mind. I did my best.

ROSE. It was a horrible experience.

SURRAGE. But to me it was extraordinarily interesting.

ROSE. You mean that woman, father?

SURRAGE. I don't feel that I can settle down to my humdrum life again.

ARCHIE. What, sir! We were thinking that we owed it to you to leave you in peace.

SURRAGE. But I don't want peace.

ARCHIE. Surely, sir——

ROSE. But, father——

SURRAGE. I find I've been missing all sorts of things.

ARCHIE. Missing? But really, sir——

ROSE. You just want to be quiet again, father. We shall certainly not permit you to be bothered again.

SURRAGE. You don't think I'm going to stop here doing nothing, do you?

ROSE. But——

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

ARCHIE. But——

SURRAGE. I'd rather try the middle of Africa or the North Pole. You've stirred me up.

ROSE. We should never have had them here if we had known what we know now.

ARCHIE. As to that fellow Vallance, I ask your pardon, sir, for bringing him—for my share in bringing him here.

SURRAGE. The brute. Yes. But an extraordinarily interesting man.

ARCHIE. What!

ROSE. Father, you would never have been happy with her. You've had a fortunate escape.

SURRAGE. It seems to me that it all depends on what I've escaped to.

ROSE. Forgive me, father, but it's an infatuation. Mrs. Staines—well, compared with many of the women I know——

SURRAGE. Hah! Introduce me to them, then.

ARCHIE. Really, sir——

SURRAGE. I'm opening out to new ideas.

ROSE. But, father, we have an ideal of you that——

SURRAGE. Oh, hang the ideal!

ROSE. These horrible people would corrupt you.

SURRAGE. Not a bit of it. I may do them some good.

ARCHIE. Leave well alone, sir. Leave well alone.

SURRAGE. It isn't well. I've been bored to death. This week-end has been most exhilarating and

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

strangely interesting. We must have more of them, or—I'll tell you what—we'll sell this house and go back to London.

ARCHIE. Oh, but you know——

ROSE. Father! Father!

SURRAGE. By Jove, we will!

*Curtain.*

## ACT IV

*Six months later. A room in Bond Street communicating with an exhibition of VALLANCE'S pictures, glimpses of which can be seen on the walls of the inner—really the outer—room. During the progress of the scene people may be seen occasionally, with catalogues, etc., inspecting the pictures. SURRAGE is seated at a table writing. He is very brisk and debonair. ARCHIE enters.*

ARCHIE. Hullo, sir! How are you?

SURRAGE. Hullo, Archie! Capital, my boy—capital.

ARCHIE. And how's the show getting on?

SURRAGE. We're selling 'em like hot cakes. This thing is being run on business principles. Vallance only wanted advertising. I saw that. He's a remarkable man.

ARCHIE. And how does he like it?

SURRAGE. Not at all. That's the joke. He says he doesn't. He comes hectoring here. Oh, of course he must like it. He's making money. He's on velvet. No starvation now. Do you know, Archie,

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

why he came to us for that week-end—when was it—six months ago? The poor devil was—ah! but I oughtn't to talk of it. He's all right. He's all right now.

ARCHIE. Well, I never thought you'd take to the fine arts. You must be making handsome commissions yourself.

SURRAGE. Oh, I soon got the hang of it. But, you know, my boy, I'm a little bit worried about one thing. Art, you know. Art. I don't get on as fast as I should like with that. It's a bit of a mystery, isn't it? These pictures of Vallance's now. [*He points to the other room.*] Thundering good, aren't they? I read the *Times* and the *Spectator* and all of them. Well, I'm dashed if I can see it. Not entirely. Of course, I'm getting on. You know, as a tradesman, I like to have confidence in the article I sell. I have confidence because I see the right people have. But I want to understand why they come. And Vallance isn't reasonable. I can't get him to explain. I've got a notion, though. I've got a plan.

ARCHIE. Look here, sir. Rose and Violet are in the show there, looking at the pictures. Not to beat about the bush, they've sent me in to speak to you. Now, it's a delicate matter—you'll excuse me—it seems that Suckling—of course, you know how thick Suckling is with Violet—well, Suckling has been telling them that he believes Mrs. Staines is going to get married.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. Indeed ! How did he know that ?

ARCHIE. I can't tell you how he got to know. Is it true ?

SURRAGE. Very likely. Why not ?

ARCHIE. Well, sir, really, you know—there's only one man she ought to marry, and he's got a wife.

SURRAGE. Ah ! If you mean Vallance, he hasn't got a wife.

ARCHIE. But——

SURRAGE. She's dead. She died before he came to stay with us, that time.

ARCHIE. Oh !

SURRAGE. You remember after that charming week-end that you arranged, they went away together.

ARCHIE. Of course I do.

SURRAGE. But they separated and they've hardly seen one another since.

ARCHIE. Then she's not going to marry him ?

SURRAGE. Isn't she ?

VALLANCE *comes striding through the exhibition. In his own way he is better dressed than he was and looks more prosperous.*

VALLANCE. You sent for me. What is it ?

ARCHIE [*to his father*]. I'll see you again presently. [*He returns to the exhibition. He and Vallance have not greeted one another.*]

VALLANCE. What do you want ?

SURRAGE. Yes. I just want you to show yourself a bit more.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Show myself?

SURRAGE. Yes. You're an interesting personality, you know, and I think if you were about you might attract buyers.

VALLANCE. What the devil do you mean?

SURRAGE. Now, my dear fellow, no blustering. I mean just what I say. You're a picturesque fellow and the women like it. They're not the buyers, you'll say. But it all helps the advertisement.

VALLANCE. I won't stand much more of this.

SURRAGE. Now, look here, Vallance. I thought we understood one another. You've put your affairs into my hands——

VALLANCE. It seems to me you took them into your hands.

SURRAGE. As you like. From a business point of view I'm running you, and I mean to do it on business principles.

VALLANCE. Yes? Yes? What next? What's the next outrage?

SURRAGE. There's no outrage—but there is something I want you to do.

VALLANCE. I won't do it. What is it?

SURRAGE. What's the good of telling you if you won't do it?

VALLANCE. Well, what is it?

SURRAGE. I want you to give a lecture explaining your pictures.

VALLANCE. Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!

SURRAGE. Amuses you, does it?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. Ha! ha! ha! "Amuses" isn't the word.

SURRAGE. What is the word?

VALLANCE. There isn't one. The language is beggared. No wonder. It's a new sensation.

SURRAGE. Well, I suppose you've no objection?

VALLANCE. I believe, on the whole, I'm glad to have met you. It would have been a great pity to miss you.

SURRAGE. Same to you.

VALLANCE. How did you manage it? I seem to be delivered over to you, body and soul. It was partly Janey's doings. You're a masterful man. You've been too many for me.

SURRAGE. Yes, but isn't it better for you? Be reasonable. You've said yourself you're doing better work now. Your mind's at rest, and your body. Why man! you're looking like a bridegroom. You *are* a bridegroom. I believe I've done some good in the world.

VALLANCE. You've subdued me. You've beaten me.

SURRAGE. Beaten you! Talk sense. It's you that's winning. Don't you see that? You're having your triumph. Splendid pictures you're painting now, so they say, and you admit it—you admit it yourself. You're a happy man—and it's all through business principles which are, really, when you come to think about it, sound morality.

VALLANCE. What I can't stand about you is that you're right. You're a preposterous bourgeois, you're

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

fantastic in your absurdities, but you've a way of being right.

SURRAGE. Oh, we're both right in our ways.

VALLANCE [*clapping him on the back*]. Oh! You're a good fellow. You're a good fellow. [*He holds him in a kind of embrace. SURRAGE struggles free.*]

SURRAGE [*embarrassed*]. Tut! tut! No, no. You've got a bit Frenchified, you know. I'm not accustomed to these manners.

VALLANCE. You thought I was going to kiss you?

SURRAGE. Each country its own manners. However, it's jolly to think we've come to an understanding. Now, about that lecture——

VALLANCE. Lecture!

SURRAGE. Don't pretend you don't know what I mean.

VALLANCE. Yes, but you're not serious.

SURRAGE. Of course I'm serious. I've sent the advertisement of it to the *Times* and so on.

VALLANCE. What!

SURRAGE. Oh, yes, my dear fellow. You're billed for it, so to speak.

VALLANCE. Oh! You're mad.

SURRAGE. Not at all. You don't see it yourself, but your pictures want explaining. Mind you, I'm convinced that there's more in them than meets the eye. I'm sure of that. I can understand Landseer, I can understand Gustave Doré, and that sort of thing. But I want to have yours explained, and I

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

believe the public does. I know they're clever—I'm not sure that they're pretty——

VALLANCE. All right—all right. But I'll see you at blazes before I'll give a lecture.

SURRAGE. Now, don't be foolish. You've got to do it.

VALLANCE. Do you think I'll stand anything from you? You're a masterful man, aren't you? I tell you—I'll shut up this shop. [*He shakes his hand towards the exhibition.*]

SURRAGE. Nonsense. I'll have you chucked out if you don't mind.

VALLANCE. From my own show?

SURRAGE. It isn't yours. It's mine. Your pictures, my show—I've seen to that. You've no standing here at all.

VALLANCE. Haven't I? I'll show you whether I have or not. You old ruffian.

*Enter* MRS. STAINES.

MRS. S. Quarrelling again!

SURRAGE. Yes, but we're beginning to understand one another.

MRS. S. Thank Heaven!

SURRAGE. Well, when's this wedding to be?

VALLANCE. Who says there's going to be one?

SURRAGE. I say so.

MRS. S. His wife has not been dead a year.

SURRAGE. Well, upon my soul! It's the proprieties that are in the way, then?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. I don't see why we should be forced into it by you.

SURRAGE. That isn't it at all. It's simply that you must do the right thing when you see what's right—and I'm here to show you.

VALLANCE. Janey and I get on very well as we are. Why should we conform to your beastly customs?

SURRAGE. Do you call marriage a beastly custom?

VALLANCE. I tell you what, you respectable people—you've no virtues, so you have to live by laws.

SURRAGE. I'm not going to argue with you.

VALLANCE. Why do we let him bully us like this?

MRS. S. He knows better than we do.

VALLANCE. He knows nothing. He's an ignoramus. He thinks painting is going to be upset by coloured photographs. He thinks Velasquez was a Dutchman.

MRS. S. He's our master. He goes to the root of things.

VALLANCE. Nonsense.

SURRAGE. Ah! but I'm still puzzled—still puzzled.

VALLANCE. Thank Heaven!

SURRAGE. And you won't help me?

VALLANCE. Help you? You're a man that wants hindering.

SURRAGE. You're ungrateful. I've shown you how to make an income.

VALLANCE. I'm advertised by sandwichmen.

SURRAGE. And why not?

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VALLANCE. The best drawing I ever did in my life you wouldn't hang in this show.

SURRAGE. Well, it wasn't respectable.

VALLANCE. Respectable!

SURRAGE. Now, do you think, yourself, that it was nice?

MRS. STAINES *bursts into a peal of laughter.*

VALLANCE [*curbing his fury*]. A few minutes with my pictures may calm me. [*He goes out.*]

SURRAGE. An extraordinary man. I wish I could understand him.

MRS. S. But he can't understand you.

SURRAGE. When's the wedding?

MRS. S. You are anxious for it?

SURRAGE. Of course I want what's right.

MRS. S. You are wonderful. You are, really.

SURRAGE. The simplest things seem to astonish you.

MRS. S. But they're so astonishingly simple.

SURRAGE. Well, ma'am, get things straight—get them straight.

MRS. S. Then you really want me to marry Mr. Vallance?

SURRAGE. Certainly.

MRS. S. [*rather disappointed*]. There was a time when you didn't.

SURRAGE. You mean—oh! yes.

MRS. S. It was wonderfully romantic of you.

SURRAGE. I believe I was a bit in love with you.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

MRS. S. A bit! Oh! Yes, yes, yes—I understand. You are very noble. I see.

SURRAGE. What do you see?

MRS. S. You're not a man to publish your sorrows when they would hurt others.

SURRAGE. What sorrows?

MRS. S. You ask me that?

SURRAGE. Ah! I believe I've a notion what you mean. But, you know, I was bored to death then. Yes, I quite fell in love with you. Don't trouble yourself about that, ma'am. I've got something to do now.

MRS. S. Really, Mr. Surrage! Was it for want of something to do?

SURRAGE. Well, that does make a difference, doesn't it?

MRS. S. I'm not sure that I like your frankness. You did love me?

SURRAGE. Yes; but it seemed the right thing then.

MRS. S. Gracious heavens! The right thing!

SURRAGE. And it's the right thing now that you should marry Vallance.

MRS. S. But you wanted to save me—you talked about abysses and things like that. You thought I was going to destruction.

SURRAGE. Yes, but I know Vallance now. I know how harmless he is—just like a child. He's a capital fellow at bottom.

MRS. S. I think it's you that's like a child.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

SURRAGE. What is it that you want?

MRS. S. I? Nothing? But you have become so matter-of-fact.

SURRAGE. Good heavens, ma'am! You don't want me to sentimentalize with you now.

MRS. S. Then you weren't serious?

SURRAGE. When?

MRS. S. That morning. At your house.

SURRAGE. Yes, I was serious.

MRS. S. Then you're fickle.

SURRAGE. Fickle? No. You wouldn't have me.

MRS. S. And so you don't care a button for me now?

SURRAGE. Really, ma'am, I don't see what we're trying to get at.

MRS. S. I thought you had a passion for me.

SURRAGE. Yes, if you had let me.

MRS. S. But you can't control passion like that.

SURRAGE. I can.

MRS. S. Was it real? Was it real?

SURRAGE [*rather sternly*]. I think that's enough.

MRS. S. But I want to know. It was so much to me. You don't know how precious it was to me. I didn't love you. I only liked you enormously. But to find that it was all nothing——

SURRAGE. It was all that you thought—perhaps more.

MRS. S. Thank you. [*She bows.*] But you're queer, you know. You are so queer.

SURRAGE. I might say the same of you.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

MRS. S. Mind! I love him.

SURRAGE. I understand that.

ROSE and VIOLET appear at the door with  
SUCKLING behind.

ROSE. Oh!

SURRAGE. Come in. Come in. [*They advance tentatively.*]

SUCKLING. How d'ye do, sir?

SURRAGE. You, is it? I thought I told you not to come near me till you'd got a job.

VIOLET. But he has got one.

SURRAGE. What?

SUCKLING. I'm with my uncle at Lloyd's.

SURRAGE. Lloyd's?

SUCKLING. Underwriting! You know. Ships.

SURRAGE. Is it a job that needs any head?

VIOLET. Now, father, you've no right to talk like that when he's done what you told him.

SUCKLING. It's a rum business, I can tell you. As far as I can make out it's like this—you stand to lose ten thousand if the ship goes down, and if she doesn't you make about ninepence. It's an eye-opener. I'm going to write a play about it—in my spare time, of course.

ROSE [*she has maintained a non-committal air after bowing coldly to MRS. STAINES*]. Come, Violet.

SURRAGE. Wait a bit, Rose. I want you to make some preparations. We're going to have a wedding.

ROSE. Father!

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. Oh, dear!

SUCKLING. By Jove!

SURRAGE. What's the matter? Ha! here's the bridegroom.

VALLANCE *and* ARCHIE *enter*.

ROSE. Where? Who?

SUCKLING. By Jove!

ARCHIE. I've been congratulating Mr. Vallance.

ROSE. What! It's not——

MRS. S. Won't somebody congratulate me?

ROSE [*gasping*]. I'm so glad. But what did you mean, father, by our making preparations for a wedding?

SURRAGE. Why! The wedding must be from our house.

VIOLET. Our house!

ROSE. Oh! Really! but——

ARCHIE [*aside to ROSE*]. Keep quiet. We've got off well enough.

SURRAGE. I hear what you say, sir. You have got off well enough. You're cold-blooded young people. You're illiberal; you're conventional. You're unkind. I'm ashamed of you. I'm ashamed.

*They stand abashed and startled at his emotion. ROSE turns away suddenly, crying. SURRAGE instinctively moves towards her.*

My dear! My dear! But it's all my fault.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

I've neglected you. I've lost you. I've been a bad father.

ROSE [*composing herself, to* MRS. STAINES]. We shall be glad if you will, if you will—do as my father says.

VALLANCE. If we are to be married we shall go to a registry office without troubling you or anybody.

SURRAGE. Now, that's not friendly, Vallance.

VALLANCE. I apologize—I apologize. But we're off; we're going; we can't stop. We're setting out immediately for the Antipodes.

SURRAGE. But you've got to give that lecture first.

VALLANCE. I'll see you eternally roasted before I do.

ARCHIE. What lecture?

VIOLET. A lecture!

SURRAGE. On his pictures. Yes.

MRS. S. It's you who should give the lecture.

SURRAGE. I? Do you think so? I've got a few ideas about Vallance, certainly. He's an interesting subject.

VIOLET. But, father, you're not going to lecture on Art, are you?

SURRAGE. If I lectured it would be on artists. They're what interest me. Charming people, but they want keeping straight. Sometimes I think they're very immoral; but, begad, here's Vallance—as immoral as any of 'em—and he works like a slave, and would starve for his ideas. Well, all he wants is business methods applied to his morals.

## THE EDUCATION OF MR. SURRAGE

VIOLET. Father's started on his lecture.

SUCKLING. Bravo, sir ! Bravo !

MRS. S. But I thought it was to be about the pictures.

SURRAGE. Yes, but—dash it !—I can't make head or tail of them. But I'm going to try. I'm going into that. I'm convinced there's something in Art, and I mean to find out what it is.

VALLANCE. Oh ! Stop him !

SURRAGE [*thumping the table*]. No, sir. You shall not stop me. I mean to understand your pictures as well as I understand you. I'll get to the bottom of them. I won't be beaten. I tell you I'll—— [*As he speaks the others clap and cheer, drowning his voice, and he is gesticulating in the midst of them as the curtain falls.*]

*Curtain.*

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